

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5002
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
COMIDEASTFOR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SANA 2793

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, MORGJM YE
SUBJECT: YAR ARMY

BEGIN SUMMARY: YAR ARMY HAS NEVER BEEN STRONG BUT,
IN LAST SIX MONTHS, SINCE ASSASSINATION OF YAR PRESIDENT
HAMDI, IT SEEMS TO HAVE SHARPLY DETERIORATED. TRENDS
ARE OMINOUS IN VIEW OF POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED THREAT
FROM SOUTH YEMEN. END SUMMARY.

1. FOR PAST SEVERAL YEARS YEMENI ARMY HAS SUFFERED
EROSION IN ITS RANKS, LIKE ALL SECTIONS OF LABOR FORCE
HERE, DUE TO MASSIVE DEPARTURES OF WORKING-AGE MEN TO
SAUDI ARABIA TO TAKE JOBS WITH HIGH PAY. YARG DIVIDES
BUDGET BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ON ASSUMPTION THAT
THERE ARE 40,000 SERVING MEN AND OFFICERS. YEAR AGO
WE WERE TOLD ACTUAL NUMBER IS HALF THAT. NOW E WOATD
ESTIMATE THAT ACTUAL NUMBER HAS AGAIN BEEN HALVED, TO
AROUND 10,000.

2. A LOT OF SOLDIERS HAVE SIMPLY GONE OVER THE HILL TO
TAKE BETTER JOBS BUT NEW REASONS ARE NOT RPT NOT
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CONNECTED WITH MONEY, BUT WITH POLITICIZATION AND
CORRUPTION OF OFFICER RANKS PLUS LACK OF ENTHUSIASM OF MANY
SOUTHERN SOLDIERS TO SERVE UNDER NORTHERN OFFICERS.

3. WE HAVE TWO GOOD SOURCES FOR BELIEF THAT ONCE KEY
UNITS LIKE AMALIQA IN DHAMAR, RESERVES IN SANA, 1ST
INFANTRY IN AMRAN, PARATROOPERS IN SANA AND ELSEWHERE,

MAY EACH HAVE STRENGTH OF UNDER 1,000 MEN. MAJD BRIGADE IN TAIZ, UNDER KEY OFFICER ALI ABDALLAH SALAH, WHO COOPERATED WITH GHASHMI IN COUP AGAINST HAMDI, MAY HAVE 1700 MEN. ALL THESE UNITS ARE PRESUMABLY DIVISIONS WITH THREE BRIGADES EACH, THAT IS, NINE BATTALIONS IN TOTO OF ABOUT 500 MEN EACH.

4. GROWING INDISCIPLINE IS ABETTING WEAKNESSES IN SKILLS. TRAINING IS VERY LIMITED, AS IS MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT. CORRUPTIONS DERIVES CHIEFLY FROM SUMS BEING PAID TO ENSURE LOYALTY BUT, IN ADDITION, SPARE PARTS, FOOD, UNIFORMS, EVEN WEAPONS ARE SOLD INTO LOCAL MARKET.

5. TRAINING STRESSES OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS, PER SOVIET MANUAL, WITH COMBINED ARMS ATTACKS BACKED UP BY MASSED ARTILLERY. YEMENIS APPARENTLY CAN'T FIRE THEIR ARILLERY IN INDIRECT MODE, HOWEVER, AND COMMUNICATIONS AND TACTICAL EXERCISES SIMPLY DON'T EXIST FOR COMBINED ARMS OPERATIONS. ARMY HAS NO RPT NOT CAPABILITY IN COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS. ARMY IS REALLY POSITIONED AND MANNED TO PROTECT POWER OF PRESIDENT. UNITS ARE SUPPOSED TO BALANCE EACH OTHER, IN CLASSIC MIDDLE EAST FORMULA.

63. WE TRY TO WATCH SUCH BALANCING ACTS AND HAVE SOME
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INFOMATION ON SUBJECT. FOR INSTANCE, OFFICER CORPS IS UNDERGOING CONTINUING SHIFTS, WITH MEMBERS OF PRESIDENT'S TRIBE, HAMDAN, PICKING UP MORE AND MORE KEY POSTS. OFFICER OF NO RPT NOT DISCERNIBLE TALENT, TRAINED AS TANKER IN SOVIET UNION, HAS BEEN PUT IN CHARGE OF NAVY. HE IS HAMDANI. ANOTHER HAMDANI, ALSO SOVIET TRAINED BUT OF LITTLE TALENT, IS DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF. WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS THAT PRESIDENT IS CREATING SPECIAL FORCE FOR HIS PERSONAL PROTECTION USING HAMDANIS. PRESIDENT'S VILLAGE OF DHALA', NEAR SANA IN ANY CASE, IS BEING DEVELOPED TO WITHSTAND SIEGE. TANKS, TRUCKS, ROCKET LAUNCHERS ARE PRE-POSITIONED THERE. IN TRIBALIZED OFFICER CORPS, THESE TRENDS ARE BOUND TO BE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL.

7. GHASHMI IS WIDELY CREDITED WITH GREAT SKILL IN SECURITY MATTERS, PARTICULARLY IN DEALING WITH ARMY OFFICERS, BUT HE HAS FACED THREE MAJOR REVOLTS SINCE COMING TO POWER, RESPECTIVELY BY ALI HUBAYSHI, AMALIQA COMMANDER, MOUJAHID KOUHALI, 1ST INFANTRY COMMANDER, AND ABDALLAH ABD AL AL ALIM, PARATROOP COMMANDER. NOW THERE ARE INDICATIONS THATHE IS ESASING OUT HANUD

QATINAH, ANOTHER OF EXECUTIONERS OF HAMDI, AND
COMMANDER OF RESERVES. ALSO, WE HAVE HAD MORE REPORTS
THAN WE CAN DISCOUNT OF DISPUTES OVER DEMANDS MADE BY
AMBITIOUS ALI ABDALLAH SALAH, MAJD BRIGADE COMMANDER.

8. AS EMBASSY, WE ARE NOT CLOSE TO MILITARY. OFFICERS
ARE CLANNISH AND, GENERALLY, VERY BADLY EDUCATED.
SAUDIS WON'T SHARE INFORMATION WITH US, IF THEY HAD IT.
SAUDIS ARE ALSO JEALOUS ABOUT CONTACTS BY US WITHIN
YAR MILITARY RE MILITARY SUPPLY. RE YAR MILITARY, THERE-
FORE, WE ARE REPORTING INFORMATION WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE
TO VERIFY. HOWEVER, IT FIGURES SIGNIFICANTLY IN
CONVERSATIONS TODAY IN SANA AND BEARS ON TWO VITALLY
IMPORTANT POLITICAL FACTS: SURVIVAL OF GHASHMI AS
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PRESIDENT AND YAR CAPABILITY TO CONTEST PDRY EFFORTS
PO SUBVERT OR INVADE YAR. NEITHER PROSPECT IS REALLY
GOOD.

9. STATE OF MILITARY ALSO BEARS ON KEY U.S. POLICY:
ARMS SUPPLY VIA SAUDIS. OUR TRILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS
REALLY AREN'T WORKING VERY WELL. DELIVERY OF MILITARY
GOODS TO SAUDIS FOR DISTRIBUTION HERE, ACCORDING LO
"PLAN" FOR RETRAINING AND REORGANIZATION, SIMPLY ISN'T
GOING AHEAD. MANY FEEL SAUDIS WANT WEAK YEMENI
ARMY; OTHERS BLAME SAUDI INCOMPETENCE AND
YEMENI INDISCIPLINE. IN ABSENCE OF THREAT FROM
PDRY, WE WOULD SAY THAT PROGRAM IS AT LEAST AT
POLITICAL SUCCESS: IT'S SLGLLY SQUEEZING OUT THE
SOVIETS, TYINIUYEMENIS TO KINGDOM. BUT IN PRACTICAL
TERMS, PROGRAM IS GETTING NOWHERE. YAR ARMY IS
DETERIORATING.
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